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Illegal Israeli actions in Occupied East Jerusalem and the rest of the Occupied Palestinian Territory

Security Council
Sixty-third year

Identical letters dated 5 November 2008 from the Permanent Observer of Palestine to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General and the President of the Security Council

I convey the present letter to you with a strong sense of urgency, knowing that the actions and events we wish to highlight are of extreme importance at this critical juncture. Tensions are high as, once again, reckless Israeli actions threaten to further destabilize the fragile situation and reignite the deadly cycle of violence between the two sides.

Today, thousands in the Gaza Strip are mourning the death of six Palestinians and are highly anxious about the prospects of renewed Israeli military attacks and violence against the besieged civilian population in the area. They started late on Tuesday, 4 November 2008, in the Gaza Strip when a number of Israeli tanks entered an area east of Deir Al-Balah in central Gaza, launching intensive shelling as well as gunfire towards civilian houses. The indiscriminate Israeli shelling killed Saada Mazen and injured four others, including one woman. The Israeli occupying forces also destroyed two houses during the invasion and abducted seven civilians, including four women. At the same time, Israeli warplanes launched several strikes east of Deir Al-Balah, killing six Palestinians and injuring several others.

This latest Israeli military attack is a clear violation of the Egyptian-mediated ceasefire reached in June of this year which has brought a period of calm. Moreover, it signals an Israeli intention to reignite the cycle of violence and cause further suffering in an already devastated society, living a humanitarian disaster because of the punitive, inhumane siege that Israel, the occupying Power, has been imposing on the Palestinian civilian population in Gaza for more than a year.

At the same time, these irresponsible and violent actions come at a very critical juncture for Palestinians, who are preparing to meet in Cairo, under the auspices of Egypt, in an attempt to reach a much-sought national reconciliation agreement. Such scenes of death and destruction are sure to provoke anger and anxiety in Palestinian public opinion as well as in the leaderships of the factions due

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to meet in Cairo in the coming week. We perceive this senseless escalation of violence as a wilful Israeli attempt to interfere in internal Palestinian affairs and to undermine efforts under way in this regard and we absolutely reject and condemn such actions.

In addition to the military attacks on the Gaza Strip, Israel, the occupying Power, has also continued to undertake other illegal actions, especially in occupied East Jerusalem, which undermine peace efforts and provide further evidence as to the lack of goodwill and commitment towards peace of the Israeli side.

In and around occupied East Jerusalem, the occupying Power continues a feverish campaign of illegal seizure of properties as well as the closure of the city, aimed at the "quiet transfer" of the indigenous Palestinian population out of the city and the creation of more facts on the ground to alter the demographic composition, character and status of the city. Just today, the occupying Power demolished four homes in East Jerusalem, three in the Al-Bustan neighbourhood in Silwan, and another home in Shu'fat. During these illegal demolitions, the Israeli occupying forces injured at least seven Palestinian civilians. Simultaneously, Israel continues to pursue its escalating, illegal campaign of settlement construction and expansion in and around East Jerusalem.

Elsewhere in the West Bank, Israel continues to show utter disregard for Palestinian lives, properties and rights as the occupying forces choose to stand idly by and watch as Israeli settlers intensify their campaign of terror against Palestinian civilians, especially in Al-Khalil (Hebron). There, 650 armed and fanatic settlers continue to illegally seize homes, fields and other Palestinian properties and to daily harass, intimidate and cause harm to Palestinian civilians, including children. Moreover, in addition to the settler violence and terror, Al-Khalil, the largest Palestinian city in the West Bank, is also now a city whose economy has been choked by eight years of closure that have driven most business out of the city. Reports of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs of the United Nations Secretariat indicate that more than 101 roadblocks, barricades and military checkpoints are preventing the pursuance of normal life in the city and are shredding its old city, for the sole purpose of facilitating the presence and movement of the Israeli settlers illegally transferred at the expense of the lives of the more than 150,000 Palestinian civilians in the city. This situation constitutes a serious impediment to peace and a stark violation of the clear obligations of Israel, as an occupying Power.

The international community, including the Security Council, has clear responsibilities in this regard, including the responsibility to protect civilians in situations of armed conflict, including foreign occupation. We call upon it to take urgent measures to redress this grave situation and bring an end to the above-mentioned Israeli violations. Israel must respect its obligations as an occupying Power under international law, including humanitarian and human rights law. Action should be taken to compel Israel to cease its military campaign and its obstruction of the movement of persons and goods, including humanitarian assistance, in order to protect human life and alleviate the suffering of the civilian population in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, especially in the Gaza Strip, where any semblance of normal life has been destroyed by the occupying Power's ongoing siege and attacks.

Moreover, Israel must be called upon to uphold its responsibility to protect the civilian Palestinian population from the attacks of settlers whose illegal presence it

has funded, protected and encouraged. Such actions are not only international legal obligations, they are necessary for assuring the international community of Israel's good faith and credibility in terms of its commitment to reaching a peace agreement, proving such a commitment is real and not just limited to rhetoric or semantics.

This letter is in follow-up to our previous 320 letters to you regarding the ongoing crisis in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, since 28 September 2000. These letters, dated from 29 September 2000 (A/55/432-S/2000/921) to 20 October 2008 (A/ES-10/424-S/2008/667), constitute a basic record of the crimes being committed by Israel, the occupying Power, against the Palestinian people since September 2000. For all of these war crimes, State terrorism and systematic human rights violations committed against the Palestinian people, Israel, the occupying Power, must be held accountable and the perpetrators must be brought to justice.

I should be grateful if you would arrange to have the text of this letter distributed as a document of the tenth emergency special session of the General Assembly, under agenda item 5, and of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Riyad **Mansour**
Ambassador
Permanent Observer of Palestine to the United Nations

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Illegal Israeli actions in Occupied East Jerusalem and the rest of the Occupied Palestinian Territory

Security Council
Sixty-third year

Identical letters dated 17 November 2008 from the Chargé d'affaires a.i. of the Permanent Observer Mission of Palestine to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General and the President of the Security Council

Israel, the occupying Power, continues to escalate its military campaign in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, particularly in the besieged Gaza Strip. This latest escalation by Israel began on 4 November, in violation of the Egyptian-brokered ceasefire that has held since June 2008. In the period since 4 November, the Israeli occupying forces have killed at least 14 Palestinians and caused direct harm to the entire civilian population in the Gaza Strip as it has completely closed all Gaza crossings, even to essential international humanitarian aid, severely disrupting the food and fuel supply. This has even impacted United Nations operations on the ground, including that of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), which is providing food rations to over three quarters of a million Palestinians left needy and hungry by this inhumane Israeli siege.

In our letter to you on 5 November 2008, we clearly warned against this wilful and senseless Israeli escalation of violence, which is solely aimed at undermining the Palestinian Authority's efforts to maintain calm and promote reconciliation and at diverting attention from the peace process by dragging us all back into a vicious cycle of violence. In this regard, on 16 November, Israeli Minister Shaul Mofaz publicly called for the intensification of Israel's illegal campaign of extrajudicial assassinations and the continuation of this campaign as an official component of Israeli policy. Further, Israeli Vice-Prime Minister Haim Ramon has shameless called for cutting off electricity and water supplies to Gaza's 1.5 million residents, and there are reports, such as the one aired on the occupying Power's army radio on 11 November, referring to the razing of towns and villages in Gaza, showing abject disregard for international law and the international community's calls for respect for the safely and well-being of the Palestinian civilian population in Gaza.

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Such actions and declarations reflect utter disregard for the lives of the Palestinian civilians under Israeli occupation. In fact, we are witnessing a repulsive competition between Israeli leaders in their election campaign, in which the winner adopts the most extreme, violent, or racist position and/or action towards Palestinians. In this regard, we must stress that, as in the past, such military escalation will not bring stability or security to the area, but will only engender more violence, create more humanitarian suffering and loss and further undermine peace efforts.

Regardless of the pretext used by Israel, nothing can justify the collective punishment of over 1.5 Palestinian civilians — such actions are strictly forbidden under international humanitarian law, particularly article 33 of the Fourth Geneva Convention. The United Nations, including the Security Council, and the High Contracting Parties to the Fourth Geneva Convention must uphold their legal and moral responsibility to end this inhumane policy that only targets civilians, including children, women, the elderly and patients in urgent need of medical attention. We have repeatedly cautioned against this policy, which has been intensifying, even while a ceasefire with Israel was strictly honoured. Additionally, United Nations agencies and several other international organizations have continuously warned about the grave humanitarian impact of this punitive siege and its vast, long-term effects. Now the urgent question that must be asked is: What more is the international community waiting for before it decides to intervene and put an end to this criminal policy? Must the current Israeli-imposed humanitarian disaster in Gaza turn into an outright catastrophe before international action materializes?

At the same time, Israel continues all other violations of international law in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem. In this regard, the occupying Power persists in its attempts to create more facts on the ground, relentlessly pushing ahead with its illegal settlement campaign that seriously threatens the viability of a two-State solution and the very prospects for peace. As reported in the Israeli media, Israeli Minister Ehud Barak recently authorized the construction of hundreds more new settlement units in the West Bank. Such a decision is totally contrary to the peace process and Israel's commitments therein and is extremely damaging to the process, the credibility of which cannot withstand continued confiscation of land and construction of settlements and the wall.

Regrettably, despite all of this, no Security Council condemnation has been forthcoming on these serious issues. Continued silence will only further feed Israel's impunity, allowing it to continue committing its violations to the detriment of the human rights and dignity of the Palestinian people and all of our efforts to achieve a just and lasting peace.

The ongoing bilateral negotiations between the two parties are not taking place in a vacuum. Instead, they are and should be held in the context of full respect for obligations under international law, including humanitarian and human rights law, as well as Security Council resolutions and agreements and commitments undertaken by the two sides, including the Annapolis joint understanding. This is the context that must be upheld and respected by all concerned parties seeking to promote the peace process, including the Quartet, of which the United Nations is a member. In this regard, given these principles and obligations, we must all work to dispel any Israeli illusions that it can continue its illegal and destructive policies in the

Occupied Palestinian Territory and at the same time claim to want peace. The international community must cease appeasement of such behaviour and bear its responsibilities in this regard.

In closing, I wish to draw your attention to the commemoration by the Palestinian people two days ago of the twentieth anniversary of their Declaration of Independence. On this occasion, we reaffirm our determination to achieve the inalienable and national rights of the Palestinian people under the leadership of their sole and legitimate representative, the Palestine Liberation Organization. Indeed, despite the tragic, historic injustice that has befallen them and the continued suffering and hardship they endure, the Palestinian people still extend their hand in peace. Accordingly, we recall the statement by President Mahmoud Abbas on this occasion, in which he stated: "While we have chosen a just and comprehensive peace as means to achieving our rights fully, we say at the same time that peace and security cannot be achieved by the spearheads of brutal occupation".

The present letter is in follow-up to our previous 321 letters to you regarding the ongoing crisis in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, since 28 September 2000. These letters, dated from 29 September 2000 (A/55/432-S/2000/921) to 5 November 2008 (A/ES-10/425-S/2008/689), constitute a basic record of the crimes being committed by Israel, the occupying Power, against the Palestinian people since September 2000. For all of these war crimes, State terrorism and systematic human rights violations committed against the Palestinian people, Israel, the occupying Power, must be held accountable and the perpetrators must be brought to justice.

I should be grateful if you would arrange to have the text of the present letter and its annexed list of Palestinian martyrs distributed as a document of the tenth emergency special session of the General Assembly, under agenda item 5, and of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Feda **Abdelhady-Nasser**
Chargé d'affaires a.i.

Annex to the identical letters dated 17 November 2008 from the Chargé d'affaires a.i. of the Permanent Observer Mission of Palestine to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General and the President of the Security Council

Names of martyrs killed by the Israeli occupying forces in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem* (from Wednesday, 29 October 2008, to Sunday, 16 November 2008)

Wednesday, 29 October 2008

Mohammad Taher Abahra (65)

Wednesday, 5 November 2008

1. Ammar Saleem Salhiyya
2. Wajed Nizam Muhareb
3. Mahmoud Taha Ba'lousha
4. Omar Saleem Al-Alami
5. Mohammad Abdallah Awad
6. Mazen Nazmi Saa'da

Wednesday, 12 November 2008

1. Mohsen Moussa Al-Qedra
2. Mahmoud Na'eem Siyam
3. Rami Omar Fraina
4. Ismail Ali Abu Al-Ola

Saturday, 15 November 2008

Abdallah Husain Al-Manayaa'

Sunday, 16 November 2008

1. Talal Husain Al-Amoudi
2. Mohammad Hassouna
3. Ahmad Al-Helou
4. Bassel Al-Ouf

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* The total number of Palestinian martyrs killed by the Israeli occupying forces since 28 September 2000 is 5,295.

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Identical letters dated 5 December 2008 from the Permanent Observer of Palestine to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General and the President of the Security Council

Israeli settler terrorism against Palestinian civilians in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, has been dramatically intensifying, heightening friction between the two sides and threatening to further destabilize the already fragile, tense situation on the ground. As settlers continue their reign of lawlessness, wreaking havoc on Palestinian civilians and their properties throughout the Occupied Palestinian Territory, the situation in Al-Khalil (Hebron) in recent weeks and days has been most critical as a result of a surge of violence, harassment, intimidation and provocation by armed, extremist Israeli settlers.

The 650 Israeli settlers in Al-Khalil have for years pursued a fanatical, racist, violent agenda aimed at terrorizing the 150,000 Palestinian civilians in Al-Khalil and making their lives and existence in the city as unbearable and miserable as possible. This has included keeping Palestinian families hostage in their own homes as settlers routinely rampage throughout the city attacking and harassing civilians, including children and women, many of whom have suffered death and injury at the hands of the settlers, and destroying and pillaging Palestinian property, including homes, the marketplace and agricultural lands. Over the past few days, the settlers in and around Al-Khalil have escalated their campaign of terror with the burning of Palestinian homes, vehicles and orchards and even the desecration and defiling of Palestinian graves and mosques. Such provocative, criminal acts have inflamed tensions and led to an escalation of violent confrontations between the settlers and Palestinian civilians struggling to protect their homes and properties and the sanctity of their religious sites and graveyards.

The most recent incident took place yesterday, Thursday 4 December 2008, in which Israeli settlers burned a number of Palestinian homes in the old city of Al-Khalil and injured scores of Palestinian civilians in the area in an act of revenge for evacuating them from Palestinians homes in the Old City that they illegally took

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over. In this connection, B'Tselem, an Israeli human rights organization, released footage documenting an Israeli settler shooting two members of a Palestinian family yesterday in Hebron. The footage shows settlers attacking a nearby house of the Abu-Se'ifan family in which an armed settler fired his handgun at 40-year-old Hosni Abu-Sufian, who was shot in the chest, critically injuring him. His father, 65-year-old Abdel Hai' Abu-Sufian, was also moderately wounded in the arm. The video also shows other members of the family, who managed to overcome the shooter before an Israeli security guard from the nearby settlement of Kiryat Arba arrived at the scene and fired his weapon into the air. B'Tselem is currently delivering the video to the Al-Khalil police, "demanding that the assailant is immediately brought to justice and that the involvement of the security guard be investigated."

Robert Serry, the United Nations Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process and Personal Representative of the Secretary-General to the Palestine Liberation Organization and the Palestinian Authority, "condemned the ensuing violence and attacks by Israeli settlers against Palestinian civilians and the destruction and desecration of Palestinian property". He went on further to state that "Israel, as the occupying Power, is under obligation to protect Palestinian civilians, property and holy sites".

Today, the Palestinian leadership under President Mahmoud Abbas convened an urgent meeting and demanded that the Israeli government evacuate Israeli settlers from the old city of Al-Khalil in order to put an end to their crimes against the Palestinian civilians. The leadership also called for an urgent meeting of the Security Council to consider providing protection to the Palestinian civilian population in the area.

This incident proves once again that the impunity of the Israeli settlers is directly abetted by the Israeli occupying forces, which typically stand idly by allowing settlers to harass, intimidate, terrorize and attack Palestinians and their lands and properties with no legal consequence for their actions and no protection for the innocent civilians. Even when they murder Palestinian civilians, Israeli settlers are rarely held accountable for their crimes and enjoy virtually complete immunity from the law. In this regard, we must state clearly that Israel, the occupying Power, is responsible for the actions of the settlers it has illegally transferred to the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, in grave breach of the Fourth Geneva Convention, and it must be held accountable. Furthermore, the international community must remain firm in its condemnation and rejection of Israel's illegal settlement campaign in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and must call upon Israel to take immediate action to bring about a cessation of all acts of settler violence and terror against Palestinian civilians.

This letter is in follow-up to our previous 322 letters to you regarding the ongoing crisis in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, since 28 September 2000. These letters, dated from 29 September 2000 (A/55/432-S/2000/921) to 17 November 2008 (A/ES-10/426–S/2008/717), constitute a basic record of the crimes being committed by Israel, the occupying Power, against the Palestinian people since September 2000. For all of these war crimes, State terrorism and systematic human rights violations committed against the Palestinian people, Israel, the occupying Power, must be held accountable and the perpetrators must be brought to justice.

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(*Signed*) Riyad **Mansour**
Ambassador
Permanent Observer